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SUBJECT: BREAD AND ROSES: CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IN  
SHANGHAI

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the internet.

Summary  
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1. (SBU) Shanghai women enjoy a higher social status than in  
most other parts of China, according to attendees at a Consulate  
lunch in honor of International Women's Day. The guests talked  
freely about their own struggles as women in male-dominated  
fields such as film, law, and engineering, and expressed concern  
about the future for children growing up amidst the pressure and  
high expectations of a fast-paced city. All voiced surprise and  
pleasure to be invited to celebrate International Women's Day at  
the U.S. Consulate, hosted by a female Consul General. End  
Summary.

Women Making Their Voices Heard in Shanghai  
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2. (SBU) A March 4 lunch hosted by the Consul General turned  
into a networking event as a group of previously unacquainted  
professional women shared their experiences with Consulate  
officers and each other. The nine guests, three of whom  
previously visited the United States on U.S. Government exchange  
programs, discussed the contribution of women to society,  
politics, and the arts in Shanghai, adding that they hope to see  
more women leaders in all fields. They asked about the role of  
women in the Obama administration, particularly Secretary  
Clinton, and were surprised to learn that International Women's  
Day rose from the U.S. labor movement and that era's call for  
"Bread and Roses." With International Women's Day in China now  
mainly shorn of political substance, the guests were interested  
in the slogan's appeal for both economic security and a better  
quality of life and impressed to learn that the U.S. allocates a  
month to the celebration of women's history.

3. (SBU) Zhou Meiyang, a reform-minded staffer at the Shanghai  
Municipal People's Congress (SMPC) said she believes there will  
be more women political leaders both in Shanghai and at the  
national level in the near future. Liu Jun, Deputy Director of  
the Water Affairs Division at the Pudong New Area's  
Environmental Management Bureau and a former Humphrey Fellow,  
and Wang Li, Director of the Department of New Media at Jiefang  
Media Group, both said they see more and more women working in  
their respective fields. Lisa Zhou, Deputy Supervisor of the  
Project Development Department at the Shanghai Cultural  
Development Foundation, said her organization will continue to

empower women to make contributions to city-wide art festivals, and Peng Xiaolian, Director of the Shanghai Film Studio, commented that many Shanghai women have contributed to the film industry. While hopeful about the future, most guests lamented that "glass ceilings" limit their advancement in these mostly male-dominated fields.

¶4. (SBU) Several guests asserted that women in Shanghai enjoy a higher social status than in other parts of China. Zhang Nian, a professor at Tongji University whose expertise is feminist theory, and Zhou Meiyan from the SMPC both noted that women are treated better in Shanghai. Huang Lili from the Shanghai Angel Charity Foundation agreed with Zhang and Zhou, separately telling CongenOff that women in Shanghai have more opportunities than women in China's interior, echoing the sentiments of other guests who praised the city's gender equality (nannu pingdeng).

What Does the Future Hold for Our Children?  
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¶5. (SBU) Despite praising the opportunities in Shanghai, the women said they are concerned about the future for their children, who face the pressure of growing up in a fast-paced society with high expectations for success. Wang Li from Jiefang Media Group and Li Lan, a judge on the Shanghai High Court who earned her LL.M. degree at Temple University, both said they believe their children have too much homework and not have enough time to play. When the CG pointed out that American families struggle with similar issues, the Shanghai parents responded unequivocally that U.S. kids are much better off.

¶6. (SBU) Peng Xiaolian commented that many of Shanghai's children appear unhappy when compared to the poor children of

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migrant laborers or farmers, and many of the well-educated Shanghai children sometimes do not appear to be as intelligent as poor children who are more "street smart." Huang Lili said the difference in attitude between privileged children in the city and migrant children is obvious in the places where her foundation does charity work: "poor children are happier than rich children."

Chinese Women: To Infinity and Beyond  
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¶7. (SBU) Despite the pressures of education in Shanghai, the guests said they hope more women will grow up to study the sciences in university. Wang Hong, President of the Shanghai University of Engineering Science (currently the only female university president in East China), stated that only 30 percent of her university's students are women. In pure engineering programs, men overwhelmingly dominate; management and design programs have more women, however, and in some cases female students form the majority. It is especially difficult to find women who want to study to become pilots. Thanking the Consulate for bringing a U.S. astronaut to speak to students two years earlier, Wang said there is no reason that a Chinese woman cannot be an astronaut; this is one area where she sees a need for advancement.

Praise for One of Their Own  
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¶8. (U) All of the guests thanked the Consul General for hosting the first celebration of International Women's Day at the Consulate in their memory. Many of the guests paused at the wall of photos of Shanghai's 33 previous Consuls General, noting with satisfaction that the Consulate is now led by a woman for the first time. "I have been invited to other Consulate events but sometimes didn't feel it would be appropriate to attend," Peng Xiaolian told CongenOff. "But now I feel very welcome here."  
CAMP